

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 17522 01 OF 02 070125Z

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

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CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 CU-02 FEA-01 SY-05 MCT-01

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R 061127Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9851

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 17522

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, INS

SUBJ: CONVERSATION BETWEEN CONGRESSMAN SOLARZ AND MRS. GANDHI;
THE EMERGENCY AND US-INDIA RELATIONS

1. CONGRESSMAN AND MRS. SOLARZ, ACCOMPANIED BY THE CHARGE',
WERE RECEIVED BY PRIME MINISTER GANDHI FOR ONE HOUR AND 45
MINUTES ON DECEMBER 2. THIS MESSAGE, BASED PRIMARILY ON
CONGRESSMAN SOLARZ' NOTES, REPORTS MRS. GANDHI'S VIEWS ON THE
EMERGENCY AND HER BRIEF COMMENTS ON US-INDIA RELATIONS. A
SEPARATE MESSAGE WILL BE TRANSMITTED ON MRS. GANDHI'S COMMENTS
REGARDING FAMILY PLANNING.

2. CONGRESSMAN SOLARZ OPENED THE CONVERSATION ON THIS SUBJECT
BY ASKING MRS. GANDHI WHY INDIA COULD NOT HAVE ACCOMPLISHED
AS MUCH WITHOUT HAVING DECLARED AN EMERGENCY. MRS. GANDHI
REPLIED THAT IF INDIA COULD HAVE FUNCTIONED WITHOUT THE EMERG-
ENCY, IT WOULD NOT HAVE DECLARED ONE AND THEN GAVE A DETAILED
HISTORY OF THE EVENTS WHICH LEAD UP TO THE EMERGENCY. IN 1971,
SHE SAID, THE CONGRESS GOT OVER 2/3'S OF THE SEATS IN THE
PARLIAMENT AND THE OPPOSITION PARTIES CONCLUDED THE THEY
COULD NEVER WIN ANOTHER ELECTION. THEREFORE THE OPPOSI-
TION ADOPTED "PROGRAM OF HATRED AGAINST ME". THE EXTREME
LEFT AND THE EXTREME RIGHT JOINED FORCES AGAINST THE GOVERN-
MENT, WHICH SHOULD HAVE TAKEN A FIRM STAND THEN, BUT DIDN'T
THE STUDENTS DIDN'T STUDY, BUT JOINED AGITATIONS. THE

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PAGE 02 NEW DE 17522 01 OF 02 070125Z

WORKERS DIDN'T WORK, BUT INSTEAD STRUCK, AND FOR THE FIRST

TIME COMMITTED SABOTAGE AFTER THEY RETURNED TO WORK. THE 1973 NATIONAL RAILWAY STRIKE "COST A LOT OF MONEY AND FOREIGN EXCHANGE" WHICH INDIA COULDN'T AFFORD. THE STRIKE LEADER, GEORGE FERNANDES, WHO WAS NOT HIMSELF A RAILWAY MAN, OPENLY SAID THAT THE PURPOSE OF THE STRIKE WAS NOT TO BENEFIT THE WORKERS BUT TO PARALYZE THE GOVERNMENT AND BRING ABOUT A REVOLUTION. MRS. GANDHI REMARKED THAT IN A BIG COUNTRY LIKE INDIA IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO TOLERATE INSTABILITY.

3. THEN MRS. GANDHI TURNED TO THE GUJARAT PROBLEM, WHICH SHE SAID WAS PARTLY THE FAULT OF THE CONGRESS PARTY AND ITS LEADER (CHIMANBHAI PATEL). THERE WAS A SEVERE DROUGHT, OIL PRICES WENT UP, THERE WAS LOTS OF SMUGGLING AND AN AGITATION DEVELOPED AMONG THE STUDENTS BECAUSE OF INCREASED CANTEEN PRICES. THE CHIEF MINISTER SHOULD HAVE COMPRO-MISED ON THE CANTEEN ISSUE BUT DIDN'T AND THE TROUBLE WORSENER. MRS. GANDHI SAID THAT SHE ASKED THE CHIEF MINISTER TO RESIGN BUT HE DID NOT. THE AGITATIONS THEN USED COERCION TO FORCE CONGRESS MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY TO RESIGN AND UNDER THE SYSTEM THEN IN EFFECT, THE SPEAKER HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO ACCEPT THEIR RESIGNATIONS. FINALLY, THE ASSEMBLY WAS DISSOLVED AND THE CHIEF MINISTER RESIGNED FROM THE CONGRESS AND FORMED AN OPPOSITION PARTY. THEN THE COMBINED OPPOSITION Began THE SAME CAMPAIGN IN THE STATE OF BIHAR BUT THIS TIME THE GOVERNMENT WAS ABLE TO PREVENT THE SAME OUTCOME.

4. THE PRIME MINISTER INDICATED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD NOT TAKEN A FIRM STAND IN REGARD TO MUCH OF THIS ACTIVITY AND SO PEOPLE BEGAN TO PRESSURE THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT BECAUSE THEY THOUGHT IT WAS WEAK AND WOULD GIVE INTO OTHER PRESSURES AS WELL. THERE WAS LITTLE RESPECT FOR GOVERNMENT. VIOLENCE WAS ON THE INCREASE AND THERE WAS LOTS OF SABOTAGE. MRS. GANDHI SAID THAT PEOPLE CAME TO HER AND SAID, "YOU MUST STOP IT", BUT SHE DID NOT WISH TO ARREST THE POLITICIANS. THEN, SHE SAID, WAS THE COURT DECISION AGAINST HER ON TWO COUNTS WHICH WERE "ABSOLUTELY TRIVIAL". THIS WAS A POLITICAL MOVE; THE OPPOSITION LEADERS SEEMED TO KNOW WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IN ADVANCE. THEREAFTER THE OPPOSITION STARTED A CAMPAIGN FOR HER LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 NEW DE 17522 01 OF 02 070125Z

RESIGNATION AND STARTED RALLIES AROUND THE COUNTRY. SO "WE HAD RALLIES ALSO AND OUR RALLIES WERE MUCH BIGGER". CHIEF MINISTER CAME TO SEE MRS. GANDHI IN NEW DELHI AND WARNED HER THAT THERE WOULD BE ATTEMPTS TO ASSASSINATE HER AND HER FAMILY JUST AS HAPPENED TO SHEIKH MAJIB IN BAGLADESH, AND EVEN THEN, MRS. GANDHI SAID, SHE HESITATED.

5. MRS. GANDHI EXPLAINED THAT THE OPPOSITION, USING THE SAME TECHNIQUE AS IN GUJARAT, THEN BEGAN A NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO GET MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENT TO RESIGN TO BRING ABOUT DISSOLUTION OF THE NATIONAL PARLIAMENT. MRS. GANDHI DISCOVERED THAT THE PERSON PLANNING THIS CAMPAIGN WAS A MEMBER OF THE BASHTRIYA SWYAMSEVAK SANGH (RSS). LEADERS OF THIS ORGANIZATION WANTED TO ESTABLISH A RELIGIOUS STATE, OPENLY PROMOTED VIOLENCE AND DID NOT BELIEVE IN DEMOCRACY. IN FACT THEY PRAISED HITLER FOR HIS THEORIES OF RACIAL PURITY AND FOR HAVING BROUGHT STABILITY TO GERMANY. (MRS. GANDHI DIGRESSED TO DESCRIBE THE RSS ROLE IN THE ASSASSINATION OF MAHATMA GANDHI.) SUCH VIEWS WOULD BE DISASTROUS FOR A MULTI-RELIGIOUS COUNTRY. OPPOSITION LEADERS CRITICIZED THE PRIME MINISTER FOR THE BANGLADESH WAR AND HER DECISION TO MEET WITH BHUTTO. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS STOPPED CARRYING OUT ORDERS; THEY WERE BEING BULLIED BY RSS THUGS. THERE WERE ALLEGATIONS OF CORRUPTION AGAINST THE RAILWAY MINISTER, CHARGES WHICH COULD NOT BE PROVED. CAREERS WERE MADE BY ATTACKING THE GOVERNMENT. THE PRIME MINISTER EXPLAINED THAT THIS WAS THE ATMOSPHERE IN INDIA AND EVERYONE WAS DRIFTING ALONG WITH IT. SHE SAID THAT SHE ASKED THE LAW MINISTER WHAT COULD BE DONE UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND HE REPLIED THERE WAS NO ALTERNATIVE TO DECLARING A FULL EMERGENCY.

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 17522 02 OF 02 061738Z

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 NEW DELHI 17522

6. CONGRESSMAN SOLARZ ASKED THE PRIME MINISTER ABOUT POLI-

TICAL PRISONERS; HOW MANY WERE THERE. SHE REPLIED THAT THE VAST MAJORITY WERE NOT POLITICAL AND THAT MOST OF THE POLITICAL PRISONERS HAD BEEN RELEASED. SHE SAID IN CONFIDENCE, THAT THE STATE GOVERNMENTS HAD BEEN CONDUCTING PERSONAL VENDETTAS AGAINST PEOPLE THEY SIMPLY DID NOT LIKE. MRS. GANDHI WAS TRYING TO GET THEM RELEASED. TRIALS WERE NOT FEASIBLE BECAUSE IN INDIA "A TRIAL IS SUCH A LONG-WINDED AFFAIR". MR. SOLARZ ASKED IF THE EMERGENCY COULD BE ENDED. MRS. GANDHI REPLIED THAT SOME FORM OF EMERGENCY WILL BE NECESSARY TO DO SUCH THINGS AS CONTROL SMUGGLING AND OTHER ECONOMIC CRIMES. HE ASKED IF ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD. "WE CANNOT PERMANENTLY POSTPONE ELECTIONS," WAS HER REPLY. WHEN THE CONGRESSMAN ASKED HER WHETHER THE CONTINUATION OF THE EMERGENCY WOULD BE NECESSARY FOR INDIA TO CONTINUE TO DEAL WITH ITS PROBLEMS, SHE SAID, "OF COURSE NOT BUT ELECTIONS ARE DIVISIVE AND PROGRESS COMES TO A HALT."

7. CONGRESSMAN SOLARZ ASKED WHETHER GIVEN THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE MASSES OF INDIAN PEOPLE WERE UNEDUCATED AND ILLITERATE, DEMOCRACY WAS A LUXURY WHICH INDIA COULDN'T AFFORD. "ON THE CONTRARY," SHE SAID, "INDIA CAN ONLY DEAL WITH ITS PROBLEMS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF DEMOCRACY. AS CHURCHILL SAID, DEMOCRACY IS THE WORST FORM OF GOVERNMENT EXCEPT FOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 NEW DE 17522 02 OF 02 061738Z

EVERY OTHER FORM OF GOVERNMENT THAT HAS EVER BEEN INVENTED. IT ENABLES YOU TO DEAL WITH EXPLOSIONS BY PROVIDING AN OUTLET FOR FRUSTRATIONS. IN ADDITION, HOW CAN YOU CONTROL AND GOVERN SUCH A BIG COUNTRY UNLESS YOU KNOW WHAT PEOPLE WANT." THE CONGRESSMAN ASKED WHETHER ILLITERACY WAS A BAR TO DEMOCRACY AND MRS. GANDHI CITED EXAMPLES TO INDICATE THAT ILLITERACY HAD NO CORRELATION WITH INTELLIGENCE. CONGRESSMAN SOLARZ ASKED THE PRIME MINISTER WHETHER SHE BELIEVED INDIA COULD MAKE MEASURABLE PROGRESS IN THE FUTURE. SHE ANSWERED THAT THERE HAD ALREADY BEEN MEASURABLE PROGRESS IN HER LIFETIME BUT THAT EXPECTATIONS HAD ALSO ADVANCED AND THIS GAVE PEOPLE THE OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION. NEVERTHELESS, SHE SAID MEASURES MUST BE TAKEN TO LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SUCCESS. INDIA NEEDED A CENTRIST PARTY WHICH CAN GROW BOTH WAYS AND "ENGAGE IN A BIT OF A BALANCING ACT" NO OTHER PARTY OR COMBINATION OF PARTIES CAN KEEP INDIA UNITED.

8. AS THE CONVERSATION DREW TO A CLOSE, CONGRESSMAN SOLARZ ASKED WHAT ROLE THE US COULD PLAY IN THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA. SHE REPLIED THAT THERE WAS LITTLE UNDERSTANDING OF INDIA'S DIFFICULTIES IN THE US. INDIA CANNOT HAVE DEMOCRACY, THOUGH IT BELIEVES IN IT, UNLESS IT HAS

STABILITY AND PROGRESS. DEMOCRACY IS, AFTER ALL, A METHOD TO MAKE THING BETTER. NO COUNTRY KEEPS DEMOCRACY IN TIME OF WAR AND THE SITUATION WHICH CONFRONTED INDIA WAS WORSE THAN WAR. SHE ADDED THAT THE STABILITY OF INDIA'S SOUTH ASIAN NEIGHBORS DEPENDS FIRST OF ALL ON THE STABILITY OF INDIA. TROUBLE IN THE SUBCONTINENT WOULD PRODUCE TROUBLE THROUGHOUT ASIA.

9. WITHOUT EXPLAINING EXACTLY WHAT SHE MEANT, MRS. GANDI SAID THAT INDIA DID NOT WANT THE KIND OF HELP IT GOT BEFORE BUT IT DOES WANT BETTER CONDITIONS OF TRADE. IT GENUINELY SEEKS FRIENDSHIP WITH THE US. SHE SAID THERE WAS A GENERAL FEELING IN THE US THAT INDIA TILTS TOWARDS THE USSR. SHE THEN ADDED, "INDIA APPRECIATES WHAT THE SOVIET UNION HAS DONE FOR IT, BUT WE HAVE TOLD THE RUSSIANS THAT FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH THEM DOES NOT REQUIRE US TO HAVE BAD RELATIONS WITH YOU." SCHNEIDER
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PAGE 03 NEW DE 17522 02 OF 02 061738Z

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